

PLATFORMS

OF THE

POLITICAL PARTIES,

OF

1856.

Republican Platform.

Resolved, That the maintenance of the principles promulgated in the Declaration of Independence, and embodied in the Federal Constitution, is essential to the preservation of our Republican Institutions; that the Federal Constitution and the Rights of the States, and the Union of the States shall be preserved.

Resolved, That, with our Republican Fathers, we hold it to be a self-evident truth, that all men are endowed with the inalienable right to "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness," and that the primary object and ulterior design of our Federal Government were to secure these rights to all persons under its exclusive jurisdiction; that as our Republican Fathers, when they had abolished slavery in all our national Territory, ordained that no person should be deprived of Life, Liberty, or Property, without due process of law, it becomes our duty to maintain this provision of the Constitution against all attempts to violate it, for the purpose of establishing Slavery in the Territories of the United States, by positive legislation prohibiting its existence or extension therein. That we deny the authority of Congress, of a Territorial Legislature, or any individual or association of individuals to give legal existence to slavery in any territory of the United States, while the present Constitution shall be maintained.

Resolved, That the Constitution confers on Congress sovereign power over the territories of the U. S. for their government, and that in the exercise of this power, it is both the right and duty of Congress to prohibit in the territories those twin relics of barbarism—Polygamy and Slavery.

Resolved, That while the Constitution of the United States was ordained and established in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, and promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of Liberty, and contains ample provisions for the protection of the "life, liberty, and property" of every citizen, the dearest constitutional rights of the people of Kansas have been fraudulently and vi-

olently taken from them, their territory has been invaded by an armed force, spurious and pretended legislative, judicial, and executive officers have been set over them, by whose usurped authority, sustained by the military power of the government; tyrannical and unconstitutional laws have been enacted and enforced; the rights of the people to keep and bear arms have been infringed; test oaths of an extraordinary and entangling nature have been imposed as a condition of exercising the right of suffrage and holding office; the right of an accused person to a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury, has been denied; the right of the people to be secure in their houses, papers and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures, has been violated; they have been deprived of life, liberty and property without process of law; that the freedom of speech and of the press has been abridged; the right to choose their representatives has been made of no effect, murders, robberies and arsons have been instigated or encouraged, and the offenders have been allowed to go unpunished; that all these things have been done with the knowledge, sanction and procurement of the National Administration, and that for this high crime against the Constitution, Union and Humanity, we arraign the Administration, the President, his advisers, agents, supporters, apologists, and accomplices, either before or after the fact, before the country, and before the world; and that it is our fixed purpose to bring the actual perpetrators of these atrocious outrages and their accomplices to a sure and sudden punishment hereafter.

Resolved, That Kansas should be immediately admitted as a State of the Union with her present free Constitution, as at once the most effectual way of securing to her citizens the enjoyment of the rights and privileges to which they are entitled, and of ending the civil strife now raging in her Territory.

Resolved, That the highwayman's plea, that "might makes right," embodied in the Ostend Circular, was in every respect unworthy of an American diplomacy, and would bring shame and dishonor upon any government or people that gave it their sanction.

Resolved, That a Railroad to the Pacific Ocean by the most central and practicable route, is imperatively demanded by the interest of the whole country, and that the Federal Government ought to render immediate and efficient aid in its construction, and as an auxiliary thereto, the immediate construction of an emigrant route on the line of the railroad.

Resolved, That appropriations by Congress for the improvement of rivers and harbors and of a national character, for the accommodation and security of our existing commerce, are required, authorized by the Constitution, and justified by the obligations of government to protect the lives and property of its citizens.

Resolved, That we invite the affiliation and co operation of the men of all parties, however differing from us in other respects, in support of the principles herein declared; and believing that the spirit of our institutions, as well as the Constitution of our country, guarantees liberty of conscience and equality of rights among citizens, we oppose all proscriptive legislation effecting their security.

Democratic Platform.

RESOLVED, That the American Democracy place their trust in the intelligence, the patriotism and the discriminating justice of the American people.

RESOLVED, That we regard this as a distinctive feature of our political creed, which we are proud to maintain before the world, as the great moral element in a form of government springing from and upheld by the popular will; and we contrast it with the creed and practice of Federalism, under whatever name or form, which seeks to palsy the will of the constituent, and which conceives no imposture too monstrous for the popular credulity.

RESOLVED THEREFORE, That, entertaining these views, the Democratic party of this Union through their delegates, assembled in a general Convention, coming together in a spirit of concord, of devotion to the doctrines and faith of a free representative government, and appealing to their fellow citizens for the rectitude of their intentions, renew and reassert before the American people the declarations of principles avowed by them when on former occasions, in General Convention, they have presented their candidates for popular suffrages.

1. That the Federal Government is one of limited power, derived solely from the Constitution; and the grants of power made therein ought to be strictly construed by all the departments and agents of the Government; and that it is inexpedient and dangerous to exercise doubtful constitutional powers.

2. That the Constitution does not confer upon the General Government the power to commence and carry on a general system of internal improvements.

3. That the Constitution does not confer authority upon the Federal Government, directly or indirectly, to assume the debts of the several States, contracted for local and internal improvements, or other State purposes, nor would such assumption be just or expedient.

4. That justice and sound policy forbid the Federal Government to foster one branch of industry to the detriment of any other, or to cherish the interests of one portion to the injury of another portion of our common country; that every citizen and every section of the country has a right to demand and insist upon an equality of rights and privileges, and to complete an ample protection of persons and property from domestic violence or foreign aggression.

5. That it is the duty of every branch of the Government to enforce and practice the most rigid economy in conducting our public affairs, and that no more revenue ought to be raised than is required to defray the necessary expenses of the Government, and for the gradual, but certain extinction of the public debt.

6. That the proceeds of the public lands ought to be sacredly applied to the national objects specified in the Constitution; and that we are opposed to any law for the distribution of such proceeds among the States, as alike inexpedient in policy and repugnant to the Constitution.

7. That Congress has no power to charter a national bank; that we believe such an institution one of deadly hostility to the best interests of the country, dangerous to our republican institutions and the liberties of the people, and calculated to place the business of the country within the control of a concentrated money power, and above the laws and the will of the people; and that the results of Democratic legislation in this and all other financial measures upon which issues have been made between the two political parties of the country, have demonstrated to candid and practical men of all parties, their soundness, safety and utility in all business pursuits.

8. That the separation of the moneys of the Government from bank-

ing institutions is indispensable for the safety of the funds of, the Government and the rights of the people.

9. That we are decidedly opposed to taking from the President the qualified veto power, by which it is enabled, under restrictions and responsibilities amply sufficient to guard the public interests, to suspend the passage of a bill whose merits cannot secure the approval of two-thirds of the Senate and House of Representatives, until the judgment of the people can be obtained thereon, and which has saved the American people from the corrupt and tyrannical domination of the Bank of the United States and from a corrupt system of general internal improvements.

10. That the liberal principles embodied by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, and sanctioned in the Constitution, which makes ours the land of liberty and the assylum of the oppressed of every nation; have ever been cardinal principles in the Democratic faith, and every attempt to abridge the privilege of becoming citizens and the owners of soil among us, ought to be resisted with the same spirit which swept the alien and sedition laws from our statute books.

AND, WHEREAS, since the foregoing declaration was uniformly adopted by our predecessors in National Conventions, an adverse political and religious test has been secretly organized by a party claiming to be exclusively American, it is proper that the American Democracy should clearly define its relations thereto, and declare its determined opposition to all secret political societies, by whatever name they may be called.

RESOLVED, That the foundation of this Union of States having been laid in, and its prosperity, expansion, and pre-eminent example in free government built upon entire freedom in matters of religious concernment, and no respect of persons in regard to rank or place of birth; no party can justly be deemed national, constitutional, or in accordance with American principles, which bases its exclusive organization upon religious opinions or accidental birth-place. And hence a political crusade in the nineteenth century, and in the United States of America, against Catholics and foreign born, is neither justified by the past history or the future prospects of the country, nor in unison with the spirit of toleration and enlarged freedom which peculiarly distinguishes the American system of popular government.

RESOLVED, That we reiterate, with renewed energy of purpose, the well-considered declarations of former Conventions upon the sectional issue of Domestic Slavery, and concerning the reserved rights of the States:

1. That Congress has no power, under the Constitution, to interfere with or control the domestic institutions of the several States, and that such States are the sole and proper judges of everything appertaining to their own affairs, not prohibited by the Constitution; that all efforts of the Abolitionists or others, made to induce Congress to interfere with questions of slavery, or to take incipient steps in violation thereto, are calculated to lead to the most alarming and dangerous consequences; and that all such efforts have an inevitable tendency to diminish the happiness of the people, and endanger the stability and permanency of the Union, and ought not to be countenanced by any friend of our political institutions.

2. That the foregoing proposition covers, and was intended to embrace the whole subject of slavery agitation in Congress; and therefore, the Democratic party of the Union, standing on this national platform, will abide by and adhere to a faithful execution of the acts known as the Compromise Measures, settled by the Congress of 1850; "the act for reclaiming fugitives from service or labor," included; which act being designed to carry out an express provision of the Constitution, cannot, with fidelity thereto, be repealed, or so changed as to destroy or impair its efficiency.

3. That the Democratic party will resist all attempts at renewing, in Congress or out of it, the agitation of the slavery question, under whatever shape or color the attempt may be made.

4. That the Democratic party will faithfully abide by and uphold the principles laid down in the Kentucky and Virginia resolutions of 1793, and in the report of Mr. Madison to the Virginia Legislature, in 1799: that it adopts those principles as constituting one of the main foundations of its political creed, and is resolved to carry them out in their obvious meaning and import.

And that we may more distinctly meet the issue on which a sectional party, subsisting exclusively on slavery agitation, now relies to the fidelity of the people, North and South, to the Constitution and the Union:

1. **RESOLVED**, That claiming fellowship with, and desiring the co-operation of all who regard the preservation of the Union under the Constitution as the paramount issue—and repudiating all sectional parties and platforms concerning domestic slavery, which seeks to embroil the States and incite to treason and armed resistance to law in the Territories; and whose avowed purposes, if consummated, must end in civil war and disunion—the American Democracy recognize and adopt the principles contained in the organic laws establishing the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska as embodying the only sound and safe solution of the “slavery question” upon which the great national idea of the people of this whole country can repose in its determined conservatism of the Union—**NON-INTERFERENCE BY CONGRESS WITH SLAVERY IN STATE AND TERRITORY, OR IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.**

2. That this was the basis of the Compromises of 1850—confirmed by both the Democratic and Whig parties in national conventions—ratified by the people in the election of 1852, and rightly applied to the organization of Territories in 1854.

3. That by the uniform application of this Democratic principle to the organization of Territories, and to the admission of new States, with or without domestic slavery, as they may elect—the equal rights of all the States will be preserved intact—the original compacts of the Constitution maintained inviolate—and the perpetuity and expansion of this Union insured to its utmost capacity of embracing, in peace and harmony, every future American State that may be constituted or annexed, with a Republican form of government.

RESOLVED, That we recognize the right of the people of all the Territories, including Kansas and Nebraska, acting through the legally and fairly expressed will of a majority of actual residents, and whenever the number of their inhabitants justifies it, to form a Constitution, with or without domestic slavery, and be admitted into the Union upon terms of perfect equality with the other States.

RESOLVED, FINALLY That in view of the condition of popular institutions in the Old World, (and the dangerous tendencies of sectional agitation, combined with the attempt to enforce civil and religious disabilities against the rights of acquiring and enjoying citizenship in our land,) a high and a sacred duty is devolved with increased responsibility upon the Democratic party of this country, as the party of the Union, to uphold and maintain the rights of every State, and thereby the Union of the States; and to sustain and advance among us constitutional liberty, by continuing to resist all monopolies and exclusive legislation for the benefit of the few at the expence of the many; and by a vigilant and constant adherence to those principles and compromises of the Constitution which are broad enough and strong enough to embrace and uphold the Union as it was, the Union as it is, and the Union as it shall be, in the full expansion of the energies and capacities of this great and progressive people.

1. **RESOLVED**, That there are questions connected with the foreign policy of this country which are inferior to no domestic questions what-

ever. The time has come for the people of the United States to declare themselves in favor of free seas and progressive free trade throughout the world, and, by solemn manifestations, to place their moral influence at the side of their successful example.

2. **RESOLVED**, That our geographical and political position with reference to other States of this continent, no less than the interest of our commerce and the development of our growing power, requires that we should hold as sacred the principles involved in the Monroe doctrine, their bearing and import admit of no misconstruction; they should be applied with unbending rigidity.

3. **RESOLVED**, That the great highway which nature, as well as the assent of the States most immediately interested in its maintenance has marked out for a free communication between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, constitutes one of the most important achievements realized by the spirit of modern times and the unconquerable energy of our people. That result should be secured by a timely and efficient exertion of the control which we have the right to claim over it, and no power on earth should be suffered to impede or clog its progress by any interference with the relations it may suit our policy to establish between our government and the governments of the States within whose dominions it lies. We can, under no circumstance surrender our preponderance in the adjustment of all questions arising out of it.

4. **RESOLVED**, That in view of so commanding an interest the people of the United States cannot but sympathize with the efforts which are being made by the people of Central America to regenerate that portion of the continent which covers the passage across the Inter-oceanic Isthmus.

5. **RESOLVED**, That the Democratic party will expect of the next Administration that every proper effort will be made to insure our ascendancy in the Gulf of Mexico, and to maintain a permanent protection to the great outlets through which are emptied into its waters the products raised out of the soil, and the commodities created by the industry of the people of our Western valleys, and of the Union at large.

RESOLVED, That the Democratic party recognizes the great importance in a political and commercial point of view, of a safe and speedy communication, by military and postal roads, through our own territory, between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of this Union, and that it is the duty of the Federal Government to exercise promptly all its constitutional power for the attainment of that object.

[On the fifth day of the Convention, Mr. HALLETT, Chairman of the Committee on Resolutions, reported the following, which was adopted. This Resolution is not generally published by the Democratic press, but it is a "plank," (rotten though it may be,) in which the people are interested, and we give it in connection with the "platform."]

RESOLVED, That the administration of Franklin Pierce has been true to the great interests of the country. In the face of the most determined opposition it has maintained the laws, enforced economy, fostered progress, and infused integrity and vigor into every department of the Government at home. It has signally improved our treaty relations, extended the field of commercial enterprise, and vindicated the rights of American citizens abroad. It has asserted with eminent impartiality the just claims of every section, and has at all times been faithful to the Constitution. We therefore proclaim our unqualified approbation of its measures and its policy.

American Platform.

1st. An humble acknowledgement to the Supreme Being who rules the Universe for his protective care vouchsafed to our fathers in their successful revolutionary struggle, and hitherto manifested to us, their descendants, in the preservation of the liberties, the independence, and the Union of the States.

2d. The perpetuation of the Federal Union, as the palladium of our civil and religious liberties, and the only sure bulwark of American independence.

3d. AMERICANS MUST RULE AMERICA; and to this end native born citizens should be selected for all State, federal, and municipal offices of Government employment, in preference to naturalized citizens—NEVER THE LESS,

4th. Persons born of American parents residing temporarily abroad should be entitled to all the rights of native born citizens; but

5th. No person should be selected for political station, (whether of native or foreign birth,) who recognises any allegiance or obligation of any description to any foreign prince, potentate or power, or who refuses to recognise the Federal and State Constitution (each within its sphere,) as paramount to all other laws, as rules of political action.

6th. The unqualified recognition and maintenance of the reserved rights of the several States, and the cultivation of harmony and fraternal good will between the citizens of the several States, and to this end, non-interference by Congress with questions appertaining solely to the individual States, and non-intervention by each State with the affairs of any other State.

7th. Recognition of the right of native born and naturalized citizens of the United States, permanently residing in any territory thereof to frame their constitution and laws, and to regulate their domestic and social affairs to their own mode, subject only to the provisions of the Federal Constitution, with the right of admission into the Union whenever they have the requisite population for one representative in Congress; PROVIDED, ALWAYS, that none but those who are citizens of the United States, under the Constitution and laws thereof, and who have a fixed residence in any such Territory, ought to participate in the formation of the Constitution, or in the enactment of laws for said Territory or State.

8th. An enforcement of the principle that no State or Territory can admit others than native born citizens to the right of suffrage, or of holding political office, unless such persons shall have been naturalized according to the laws of the United States.

9th. A change in the laws of naturalization, making a continued residence of twenty one years, of not all heretofore provided for, an indispensable requisite for citizenship hereafter, and excluding all paupers and persons convicted of crime from landing upon our shores; but no interference with the vested rights of foreigners.

10th. Opposed to any union between Church and State, no interference with religious faith or worship, and no test oaths for office, except those indicated in the 5th section of this platform.

11th. Free and thorough investigation into any and all alleged abuses of public functionaries, and a strict economy in public expenditures.

12th. The maintenance and enforcement of all laws until said laws shall be repealed, or shall be declared null and void by competent judicial authority.

13th. Opposition to the reckless and unwise policy of the present administration in the general management of our national affairs, and especially as shown in removing "Americans," (by designation,) and conservatives in principle from office, and placing foreigners and ultraists

in their places; as shown in a truckling subserviency so the stronger, and an insolent and cowardly bravado towards the weaker powers; As SHOWN IN RE-OPENING SECTIONAL AGITATION BY THE REPEAL OF THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE; as shown in granting to unnaturalized foreigners the right to suffrage in Kansas and Nebraska; as shown in its vascillating course on the Kansas and Nebraska question; as shown in the removal of judge Bronson from the Collectorship of New York upon false and untenable grounds; as shown in the corruptions which pervade some of the departments of government; as shown in disgracing meritorious officers through prejudice or caprice; and as shown in the blundering mismanagement of our foreign relations.

14th. Therefore, to remedy existing evils, and prevent the disastrous consequences otherwise resulting therefrom, we would build up the "American" party upon the principles herein stated, ESCHIEWING ALL SECTIONAL QUESTIONS, and uniting upon those purely national, and admitting into said party all American citizens (referring to in the 3d, 4th and 5th sections,) who openly avow the principles and opinions heretofore expressed, and who will subscribe their name to this platform. Provided nevertheless, that a majority of those members present at any meeting of a local council where an applicant applies for membership in the American party may for any reason by them deemed sufficient, deny admission to such applicant.

15th. A free and open discussion of all political principles embraced in our platform.